

The School Bus Collision Investigation Newsletter

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School Bus Driver Distractions Investigation

The School Bus Collision Investigation Team (SBCIT) must carefully consider school bus driver distraction from the forward roadway. Driver Distraction, Operational Definition—a driver who looks away from the road ahead or viewing the mirrors behind for 2 seconds or more is said to be a “distracted driver.” Driver eye movements and face can be recorded in the bus by means of videotaping or digital camera recordings to determine exact lengths of distractibility which occur for each driver during every hour of school bus route service.

The School Bus Collision Investigation Team (SBCIT) must carefully consider school bus driver distraction from the forward roadway.

School Bus Driver Inattention--Driver inattention was defined for this report as one of the following: 1) Driver engagement in secondary tasks (those tasks not necessary to the primary task of driving); 2) Driver drowsiness; 3) Driving-related inattention to the forward roadway; and 4) Non-specific eye-glance away from the forward roadway. Accounts for 12.7% of all roadway departures.

School Bus driver Eyeglance Time--Any time a driver's eyes were averted from the forward roadway, regardless of the reason, the near-crash/crash risk increases when the eyeglance is over 2 seconds.

School Bus Driver Eyeglances Away from the Forward Roadway--specifically those to check rear-view mirrors, are important to safe driving.

School Bus Driver Eyes Off the Forward Roadway--except when the driver was looking at the center, right, or left rear-view mirrors or checking traffic out the right or left windows the driver's eyes are off the forward roadway.

School Bus Driver Length of Longest Glance Away from the Forward Roadway--The length of each glance away from the roadway.

Total time school bus driver eyes are off the forward roadway--The number of seconds that the driver's eyes were off the forward roadway during the 5 seconds prior and 1 second after the onset of the precipitating factor or critical pre-crash category or event.

On-board Monitoring System--Computerized tracking of driver and vehicle performance, including speed, fuel consumption, etc.

School Bus Video Surveillance Systems--School buses may be equipped with video cameras have the technology advantage of images recorded in digital format onto a computer hard drive. The primary reason for installing video cameras on school buses is to provide security for all bus occupants. Video camera effectiveness also includes reducing bus vandalism and other disturbances on school buses. Recorded video images are also very useful in resolving problems involving passenger safety and passenger complaints. Review of the recorded images can help to determine actual events when there are conflicting versions of a safety incident or a collision event.



School Bus Driver Inattention involves Eyes off the Road (EOR), Risky Manual Tasks while driving (RMT), Risky Cognitive Tasks (RCT), and Looking but Not Seeing (LNS).

100 Driver Distractions are briefly presented in this newsletter to afford the SBCIT the myriad of distractions to which school bus drivers are subjected or when drivers subject themselves to other distractions.

Please note that the distractions are more completely analyzed and additional information presented in a separate Excel spreadsheet file. As a subscriber you may request from the author this copyrighted file for a more exhaustive treatment of the school bus driver distraction problem.

The SBCIT study of school bus driver distraction videorecordings taken within the school bus at a minimum will:

1. Document the chain of events before, during and after the collision or safety threat.
2. Substantiate or refute claims (legal, professional, conduct, best practice, tort).
3. Reinforce school bus driver accountability.